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STANDING COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SIXTY-FOURTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 10 June 1953, at 10.45 a.m.

COMMENTS

Petitions circulated under rule 85, paragraph 2, and communications circulated under rule 24. Treatment of petitions raising questions of a general nature previously considered by the Trusteeship Council (Conference room papers Nos. 23 and 24) (continued)

PRESENT:

Chairman:

Mr. YANG

China

Members:

Mr. CASSIERS

Belgium

Mr. EGUIZABAL

El Salvador

Mr. SCOTT

New Zealand

Mr. ZONOV

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Mr. McKay

United States of America

Secretariat:

Mr. RANKIN

Secretary of the Committee

Mr. BERENDSEN

Assistant Secretary of the Committee

PETITIONS CIRCULATED UNDER RULE 85, PARAGRAPH 2, AND COMMUNICATIONS CIRCULATED UNDER RULE 24. TREATMENT OF PETITIONS RAISING QUESTIONS OF A GENERAL NATURE PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL (Conference room papers Nos. 23 and 24) (continued)

The CHAIRMAN read a statement on the difficulties attending the application to petitions of a general character of the rules of procedure relating to the action to be taken on petitions.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) asked for copies of the statement to be circulated to the Committee.

It was so decided.

At the request of Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand), Mr. BERENDSEN (Secretariat) explained that the authors of petitions on specific matters received the resolution on their petition and the official records of the public meetings at which their petitions had been considered, whilst the authors of petitions on general problems received the chapter of the report of the council to the General Assembly on the territory concerned, including the recommendations adopted by the council. In point of fact, since it often happened that a petition related both to a general problem and to a particular subject, a large number of petitioners received both types of reply.

In reply to a question by Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand), Mr. RANKIN (Secretary of the Committee) said that after the last session the cost of transmitting the relevant documents to the petitioners, by surface mail, had amounted to about 200 dollars.

Mr. ZONOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) was unable to accept the classification of petitions as general and particular. The Committee and the Council were required to consider each petition separately. To do no more than merely acknowledge receipt of the petitions would be a lack of courtesy towards the petitioners. He would vote against the draft report drawn up by the Secretariat

Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) doubted whether indigenous inhabitants of the Trust Territories were able to read the replies sent them in English or French. He would like to know whether the Advisory Council for Somaliland had adequate facilities for translating the replies into Arabic.

Mr. RANKIN (Secretary of the Committee) pointed out that the question did not really present any practical difficulties, since there were plenty of public scribes and interpreters in all the Trust Territories. In Somaliland the Advisory Council Secretariat undertook the translation into English of petitions submitted in Italian or Arabic but was unable to handle translations in the contrary direction. There was, however, quite a widespread knowledge of English in the Territory.

Mr. MCKAY (United States of America) wished to know whether the special report of the Visiting Mission, mentioned in Conference room paper No. 24, had yet been on the agenda of the Trusteeship Council.

Mr. RANKIN (Secretary of the Committee) replied affirmatively.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether paragraph 7 of Conference room paper No. 24 called for a decision by the Committee.

Mr. RANKIN (Secretary of the Committee) explained that that paragraph described the implementation of paragraph 6 of Conference room paper No. 23.

The CHAIRMAN felt that the Secretary-General could be relied upon to implement the Committee's decisions.

Mr. MCKAY (United States of America) suggested that the word "documentation" at the end of paragraph 6 of Conference room paper No. 23 should be replaced by the expression "official documents of the United Nations".

Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) would like the paragraph to be supplemented by the details in the penultimate sentence of the standard form of letter annexed to Conference room paper No. 24.

Mr. CASSIERS (Belgium) proposed that rule 93 of the rules of procedure of the Trusteeship Council should be observed to the letter, and that paragraph 6 of Conference room paper No. 23 should specify that the petitioners would be informed of the action taken on their petitions and that the official records of the public meetings at which their petitions had been considered would be sent to them.

Mr. RANKIN (Secretary of the Committee) pointed out that in the case of petitions of a general character it was sometimes difficult to determine exactly which of the measures taken by the Trusteeship Council related to them and which were the meetings at which the Trusteeship Council had considered these matters.

In response to a question by the CHAIRMAN, Mr. RANKIN (Secretary of the Committee) stated that in cases where the petition was one of a general character on which the Trusteeship Council had not yet taken any decision, the Secretariat applied the normal procedure provided by rule 93 of the Council's rules of procedure. In the case of general petitions which had been the subject of a decision by the Council, rule 93 was not capable of strict application, and the Secretariat forwarded to the petitioners the relevant chapter of the Council's annual report.

Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) felt that it might be necessary to amend rule 93 of the Trusteeship Council's rules of procedure so as to specify how petitions of a general nature were to be dealt with. He proposed that consideration of that question should be deferred until the end of the Committee's session. He would abstain from voting if the Committee decided to take a decision forthwith on paragraph 6 of the draft report (Conference room paper No. 23).

Mr. CASSIERS (Belgium) considered that it would be advisable to keep to the provisions of rule 93, according to which petitioners must be informed of the action taken on their petitions by the Trusteeship Council and must receive the official records of the public meetings at which their petitions were examined.

Where a petition related to a problem of a general nature which the Trusteeship Council had considered, the petitioner was advised of the decision taken by the Council on the general problem and received the relevant reports, but if the Council had not considered the problem in question, all that could be done was to notify the petitioner accordingly and there was no need to send him any documents.

In certain cases the Committee might deem it advisable to send the petitioner some additional document, but any such action should be the subject of a special decision by the Committee.

He thought it would be well to delete the words: "as well as any other related documentation" at the end of paragraph 6 of Conference room paper No. 23 and the equivalent phrase at the end of the form of letter annexed to Conference room paper No. 24.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) proposed that consideration of paragraphs 6 onwards should be deferred. The Committee could transmit to the Council forthwith the first five paragraphs which it had adopted.

Mr. RANKIN (Secretary of the Committee) thought that the Committee could also adopt paragraphs 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) maintained the proposal he had made at an earlier meeting that paragraph 10 should be deleted. He would like to hear the Secretariat's comments on paragraphs 7, 8 and 9.

Mr. RANKIN (Secretary of the Committee) commented on paragraphs 7, 8 and 9.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) said he was prepared to accept paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9, and to defer the consideration of paragraphs 6 and 10.

The CHAIRMAN wondered whether it was advisable to retain the last sentence of paragraph 4, since the Committee was not adopting paragraph 10.

Mr. RANKIN (Secretary of the Committee) explained that paragraph 4 was merely an exposé of the procedure now being followed. By adopting it, the Committee would be establishing what was at present merely a custom. That was why the Secretariat had felt that it should be included.

Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) was prepared, after the explanations of the Secretariat, to adopt paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9, but in his opinion it would be desirable either to insert the Secretary's explanations in the report or to amend the wording of paragraph 7 slightly, to render it more specific.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) felt that paragraph 8, too, should be made more specific.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the draft report, as amended by the representatives of New Zealand and the United States, without paragraphs 6 and 10.

The draft report, without paragraphs 6 and 10, was adopted by 5 votes to 1.

Mr. ZONOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) read a note explaining his delegation's vote, and, as he had already warned the Committee at a previous meeting, he asked for his note to be included at the end of the report.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) asked for the note to be circulated in writing, before the Committee decided to include it in the report.

Mr. ZONOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) had no objection to its being translated and circulated to the Committee; he would not, however, accept any amendment to the text, for it was merely an explanation of his delegation's vote which he was asking to have included in the report, in accordance with established usage.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.